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PRONUNCIATION OF -TU- IN ENGLISH

In *JEGP* XIV, 348 ff. I called attention to what seems to me to be the physical principle involved in Verner's Law: that the retention of the voiceless consonants *f*, *þ*, *h*, *s* immediately after the chief accent is due to the relaxing of tension in the muscles of the vocal chords by way of *relief* and *reaction*, just after the moment of their greatest tension. I believe that the same principle of the relaxing of muscular tension (but this time the muscles of the tongue) is involved in the varying pronunciations in modern English of the sound-group *tu*, in such words as *tune*, *matûre*, *littérature*, by the side of *future*, *nature*, etc. Without undertaking to state what should be looked upon as the correct pronunciation, I may say that in my opinion most educated persons pronounce *future* as *fjutʃər*, or *fjuʃur*, but *tune* as *tjun*, *matûre* as *matjur*, etc. The English *u* is the rising diphthong *ju*; it is the vowel *u* preceded by the palatal spirant. This palatal spirant generally maintains itself in the combination *tjû*, when accented, but passes over into *tʃu* or *tʃə* when not accented. The palatal spirant is a sound which is made with considerable tension of the tongue muscles, the tension being even greater than for the high narrow front vowel *i*; the tongue is far forward, high, rigid; but in the sibilant *f* the muscles are very relaxed; the tongue is farther back in the mouth, much nearer to the *natural*, *effortless* position of middle elevation which it takes in forming the mixed indefinite vowel *ə*. Now when we recall that a strong stress is accompanied by a corresponding muscular tension and rigidity, we can understand how the *tju* would maintain itself in the accented syllable; but immediately after the moment of greatest stress and tension there comes a *reaction*, a *relaxing* of the muscles, hence a tendency for the tongue to approach the natural, effortless position; or, in the case in question, for *tju* to become *tʃə*.

In other words, *tju* is a clear-cut sound-group embracing three extremes of articulation, namely, point, high palatal, and high velar in immediate succession, and consequently requires that careful, exact articulation which is possible only with great muscular tension; with the relaxing of the tension in the unaccented syllable these extremes tend to approach each other in the more *middle* sound-group *tʃə*, for the *t* of this latter group lies farther back than

the *t* of *tju*, *f* is also farther back than *j*, *ə* is farther forward than *u*, and all three require *relaxed* rather than *tense* tongue muscles.

The same difference in pronunciation can be observed in this sound-group when it occurs in a syllable bearing a secondary accent, as in *literature*; persons who are careful to say *litarətjur* will generally bring a stronger stress on the last syllable than those who allow it to pass over into *litarətsur*. And following a strong secondary stress, we almost always hear *tsu*, or *tse* as in *architecture*.

To be sure, with many persons and in many parts of the country, the *tju* passes over in *tsu* even in accented syllables, as *matüre* pronounced *maɪsur*, *Tuesday* pronounced *tsuzdi*, etc. This merely indicates a *general* relaxing of muscular tension, a speech-habit that is entirely in keeping with the normal tendency of English pronunciation.

What has been said of *tju*, *tsu*, *tse*, is equally true of the voiced *dju*, *džu*, *džo* as in *duke*, *djuk*, but *educate*, *edžaket*.

C. M. LOTSPEICH.